(c) whether approval for work plan is accorded very late every year by the Border Roads Development Board (BRDB) and if so, whether Government would set a definite time-frame for preparation and approval of annual work plans?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) Border Roads Organisation (BRO) takes up execution of project departmentally, unlike other Organisations who get the work executed through contract. All efforts are made to complete the projects as per schedule and priorities indicated by user agency. However some times projects are not completed as scheduled due to various constraints like law and order problem, natural calamities, delay in availability of some resources specially in far flung areas and shortage of manpower etc. The works plan is framed as per the operational/strategic requirements in consultation with all concerned. The progress of works is continued as per works plan for which approvals are conveyed by midyear with the concurrence of army authorities and associate finance. To enable BRO to complete the entrusted roadwork (including bridges) within a definite time frame, Government have taken up actions to augment the capability of BRO in terms of manpower and equipment etc.

Defence cooperation with Malaysia

2770. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there were discussions between India and Malaysia on Defence cooperation recently;

(b) if so, the details of discussions held with the Malaysian Defence Minister during his recent visit to India; and

(c) what is the military-to-military cooperation at present between India and Malaysia?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister of Malaysia H.E. Dato' Sri Mohd. Najib Tun Abdul Razak visited India from 6th to 12th June 2006 at the invitation of Raksha Mantri. During the visit, he held discussions with Raksha Mantri on bilateral defence issues of mutual interest.

(c) A Memorandum of Understanding on defence cooperation between India and Malaysia was signed in 1993. While military training remains the principal activity in India-Malaysia defence relations, there are other areas of cooperation such as exchange of high level visits, ship visits, maritime cooperation and participation in exhibitions. There exists a Malaysia-India Defence Cooperation Committee, which meets periodically to review the defence cooperation between the two countries.

Closing down of uneconomical Military Farms

2771. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the military farms, set up almost a century ago, are currently meeting only 53 per cent of army's requirement of milk and the rest is being procured from the open market;

(b) whether the cost of milk being supplied by Military Farms is higher than the market rate for the comparable quality, because of inefficient use of manpower machinery and land; and

(c) whether recommendations were made by various committees from time to time to close down the uneconomical farms, and if so, the action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) The Comptroller and Auditor General of India in their Performance Audit Report No. 3 of 2006 has observed that Military Farms (MFs) were able to meet only 53 per cent of the annual requirement of milk of the Army. The report has also observed that the cost at which the milk was supplied by the MFs to the Army was higher than the market rate by Rs. 2.94 per litre and that the inability of the MFs to utilize their manpower, machinery and land efficiently contributed to the increased cost of production and supply.

(c) A Commitee set up by the Ministry of Defence recommended closure of 18 uneconomical military farms, which have since been closed.